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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; BUSH-PUTIN SUMMIT; US-SPAIN DISAGREEMENT
OVER POLICY ON CUBA; CHAVEZ AND PRESS FREEDOM; 05/31/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Major international stories today include President Bush hosting Russian President Vladimir Putin in July amid tensions over US plans to build a missile shield in Europe; US Secretary Condoleezza Rice's trip to Spain, which is aimed at underscoring disagreements with the Zapatero administration over the West's foreign policy on Cuba; and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's authoritarian measure to cancel the RCTV license.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Bush and Putin will meet on July 1"

Leonardo Mindez, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín," penned (05/31) "In a climate of increasing tension between Washington and Moscow reminiscent of Cold War times, Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin agreed to hold a two-day meeting aimed at smoothing points of disagreement.

"The summit will take place July 1-2 at Bush Senior's summer residence in Kennebunkport, Maine. Tony Snow, the spokesperson of the White House, justified the choice of this family setting, based on the good relationship between the two presidents, who 'openly disagree on many things' but who, in face to face meetings, 'are brutally honest in speaking their minds.'

"This is why, while Bush and Putin will meet next week at the G8 meeting in Germany, they will reserve their points of disagreement for the July summit... Russians have publicly complained about US military moves in Eastern European countries, which Moscow still considers its backyard. In concrete, the US 'anti-missile shield' project, which includes the setting up of a radar system in the Czech Republic and 10 missile interceptors in Poland, has gotten on the Kremlin's nerves."

- "The US and Spain, confronted over policy on Cuba"

Silvia Pisani, Madrid-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nación," writes (05/31) "US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will arrive tomorrow in Madrid with the purpose of emphasizing the two opposed views exhibited by Western countries regarding the future of Cuba - on the one hand, the pressure wielded by Washington. On the other hand, the Spanish socialist government defends the questioned 'dialogue' with the regime.

"... Right now, the Spanish socialist government has taken the first step in its policy of rapprochement with the Cuban regime - the first round of the questioned 'dialogue on the respect for human rights,' promoted by Spanish FM Miguel Angel Moratinos.

"One of the questioned points of that round is that Cuban dissidents are not taking part in it...

"The second criticized aspect is the fact that the government of the island does not admit the existence of political prisoners. Paradoxically enough, the Spanish government has not only denounced but also asked for the release of those prisoners.

"... Ties between the USG and the (Spanish) socialist government have never been good, particularly ever since Rodriguez Zapatero's suddenly decided to withdraw the Spanish troops from Iraq.

"The Bush administration did not like either the Spanish president's determined support for Democratic opponent John Kerry...

"The difficult relationship between both governments could enter a new stage following this first encounter to take place tomorrow."

- "Chavez restricts press freedom"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" editorializes (05/31) "After 53 years on the air, Radio Caracas Television (RCTV) was replaced by an official channel following President Hugo Chavez's decision not to renew its concession.

"The closure of the channel was widely rejected by Venezuelans and served to demonstrate the authoritarian style of the Chavez administration, which is determined to silence all criticism against it and increase control on the mass media...

"The decision not to renew the RCTV's license is one of the many examples of coercion used by the Chavez administration against the country's independent media. It is also patent blackmail against the remaining Venezuelan media that are not aligned with the official line...

"... Then, it becomes obvious that President Chavez is abusing his regulatory authority to punish the mass media for its critical posture vis a vis his administration. This is a serious retreat from freedom of expression, which some intolerant governments damage through measures that are not in line with a democratic society."

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